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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
HARRISBURG, 1942

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Pennsylvania History and Morale

By

Sylvester K. Stevens, *State Historian*

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Department of Public Instruction

PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Harrisburg, 1942

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PENNSYLVANIA HISTORY AND MORALE

By

SYLVESTER K. STEVENS, *State Historian*

ONE of our pressing needs in the war program is the development of a strong spirit of loyalty to our American ideals and democratic traditions and a desire to put forth every necessary effort to protect and defend them. The longer the emergency continues the more evident this becomes. We should also appreciate the fact that for long years after the present war is over, America will be the world custodian for the tolerance, liberty and free government which are the fundamentals of the democratic order. We are today the only nation in which these great ideals are free and untrammelled. If these responsibilities, present and future, are to be fulfilled there must be a great revival of patriotism and national feeling in our country. This is a problem of civilian morale.

In addition to this condition, we are confronted with the problems centering about the proper entertainment and education of thousands of youth in the various military training camps and posts. If their desire to defend their country is to be more than passive, it must rest upon a deep love of that country, a belief in its institutions and traditions and a willingness to make a supreme sacrifice that they may not be driven from the earth. A basic understanding of the origin and meaning of our American way of life and its advantages over the totalitarianisms which challenge it with the sword must be created.

In any program designed to build morale the reliance upon our history as a great reservoir of inspiration must be constant. We may well take a lesson from those who seek to subvert democracy. The Nazis and Fascists have themselves relied heavily upon a careful use of their national history as a means of stimulating loyalty to their schemes. The utterances of Hitler and Mussolini are replete with historical references. Naturally, these have been carefully directed to those episodes and characters designed to support their own case.

The importance of our own history as a morale resource and a unifying force in our democracy is not to be ignored. The question is how to make its use most effective. It is axiomatic that patriotism is based upon loyalty to certain ideals connected with our nation's

past development. That loyalty, however, should begin at home. Persons are loyal to and will fight for those things which they know and understand as immediate and essential to their well being. Our effort, therefore, should be directed toward building loyalty to that part of America which is the home or locale of the individual. Our citizens must be filled with a love for their community and the state of which it is a part; in turn there will be developed a love of country. Our people must translate our national ideals and aspirations into individual and community experience.

It is in this connection that the history of our state and our localities becomes important. It is up to Pennsylvania history, to furnish local backgrounds for the understanding of our American way of life. All of our great ideals and institutions had their origin in some community and with local people. No great events in our national history are without their local relationships. For example, Daniel Dobbins, builder of Perry's fleet at Erie which saved the nation from the threat of invasion as a result of the historic naval victory of September, 1813, was a native of Mifflin County. Records show that iron from the forges of Bellefonte in Centre County was used in its construction. These sections of the state thereby had a peculiar role in defending America in that day.

Without limit are the examples from purely local history which might be cited to demonstrate the role which Pennsylvania communities have played in defending and expanding our American democracy. Numerous are the personages in the history of every locality who might be cited as having contributed through their effort to making America great and defending it in its hours of peril. No state has been more generous in its leadership or in its material promotion of our national progress.

This is a time in which these services of our State and its communities should be called to the attention of every Pennsylvanian. It is a time in which we should evaluate and become more conversant with the role which we have played in the development of our American way of living. Out of that knowledge will come a great rebirth of loyalty to Pennsylvania and to America. Out of it will come a realization that Pennsylvanians have fought and sacrificed in the past that our nation might live and continue as a community of free men. From the study of our history there must come a renewed determination that

Pennsylvania will not lag in the fight for freedom; it will continue to be in the forefront in defending and advancing the standard of human liberty. Pennsylvania is—as always—the keystone in our democracy.

It is the purpose of this brief bulletin to suggest to patriotic and historical societies as well as club groups ways and means of developing a general knowledge of our state and local history as a contribution toward building morale. The Historical Commission and those in charge of our great state war program are confident that out of this understanding will come a greater loyalty and devotion to our American principles of democracy, so many of which are rooted in Pennsylvania's history.

The Patriotic Societies and Morale

Pennsylvania has numerous patriotic societies including the Daughters of the America Revolution, Daughters of American Colonists, the Colonial Dames of America and a host of others. Within the same classification may be placed the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars posts and similar organizations. All are so organized as to contribute directly to any morale-building program. For these groups it is suggested that through the state organization a movement be made to adapt the program activities of the various chapters or posts to a study of historical backgrounds of the state and community. The theme for the series might well be "Know Your State and Community Backgrounds," or "Pennsylvania Yesterdays." Emphasis should be placed upon the development of a series of programs designed to better acquaint members with significant facts concerning Pennsylvania's part in building American democracy. Each local unit of the statewide organization should endeavor to stress wherever possible highlights in local history which show the role of that community in the development of the state and nation.

As an immediate matter of importance and interest, it is suggested that an important part of such a program might be immediately devoted to the story of defense activities of the past. Pennsylvania is rich in contributions to military history and it should be profitable to review this story. It should not be forgotten, however, that modern war includes more than the raising of armies. Increasingly, it has come to affect civilians. Many valuable lessons for present use might be

gleaned from a review of the civilian war-time organizations in World War I and experiences connected with food and fuel administration, etc. Attention should be called to the careers of outstanding personalities who have achieved distinction in defending our country. Pennsylvania has been distinctive in furnishing leaders for our armed forces. There are those as well in finance and business who have rendered fundamental services in our various wars. It would be especially appropriate for the home communities of these men to honor them and recall their deeds as an inspiration to greater achievement today.

The Clubs and Morale

The communities of Pennsylvania are club conscious. Women's Clubs, Civic Clubs, professional and business clubs as well as the service clubs such as Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions are to be found throughout the state. In addition, there are numerous local groups organized for similar purposes. All are interested in promoting good citizenship, and conduct some type of program in connection with meetings.

These organizations can contribute greatly to promoting the movement to make Pennsylvanians conscious of their historic heritage both as a state and as localities. There is no reason why suggestions already made as to patriotic societies might not be readily adaptable to the clubs. A series of programs designed to acquaint members with significant facts concerning state and local history could be arranged. The suggestion that immediate attention might be directed to the role of the state in national defense in the past is also apropos.

Since the role of women has always been significant in war time, attention to this might be of special interest to the women's organizations. Effects of wars upon social and economic conditions in the past would provide valuable clues as to how to meet current problems. These groups should also be interested in the biographical approach. Attention could be directed to outstanding Pennsylvania women and their contributions to our democracy. The heroism of some outstanding characters in the days of the frontier or in time of war such as Molly Pitcher should call attention dramatically to past sacrifices of womanhood.

The service clubs and similar organizations might well pay attention to the economic effects of past wars on the state and community. Business and professional men might delve with interest and profit into various aspects of the history of their professions and businesses with a view to emphasizing their growth and peculiar place in our historical development. A review of the careers of leading figures in community history should prove of great interest and arouse a certain pride in community achievement. Pennsylvania has been so rich in its leadership in industry, finance and transportation that there should be no dearth of subjects.

State and Local History in the Schools

Certainly training in sound citizenship and love of country should start in the schools. Leading educators are concerned with the relationship of the schools to this problem in the present emergency. It is possible that the solution to the problem may be in more attention to Pennsylvania history and government in the schools. The use of local approaches to national affairs is based on a sound theory that persons are interested most in those things they are able to understand first hand. The story of how an ancient Roman helped to save his country by sacrifice or leadership may arouse a faint interest. But where is the pupil in a Pennsylvania school who would not feel a keener interest and glow of pride in learning how the heroes of his own state fought to thrust our frontier westward or to champion the cause of democracy in war and peace?

A richer meaning can be given all courses in history and related social studies by a liberal use of anecdote and example drawn from the story of Pennsylvania's past. How many appreciate and understand the thrilling events connected with the French and Indian War which began and ended on western Pennsylvania soil? Would not the story of the Homestead Act and the vast westward movement after the Civil War have greater significance if our school children were acquainted with the story of Galusha Grow, the Pennsylvanian who fathered this great piece of legislation? Should we not place emphasis upon the importance of Pennsylvania petroleum and steel in the great industrial expansion of our democracy? Are there not abundant examples of the prowess of individual Pennsylvanians in making America a great land of freedom and opportunity?

The social studies teachers of the state might well look into the possibility of drawing upon the rich store of state and local materials available to illustrate American progress in terms of Pennsylvania's contribution. This is a time to appreciate the fact that patriotism and sound citizenship should begin at home. Those coming out of our schools who know the backgrounds and traditions of our democracy as exemplified in the development of their own communities and states are going to be good Americans.

In addition to introducing supplementary material into regular courses, the larger schools may well consider the advisability of elective courses in state and local history. Such courses have operated for some years with great success at Altoona. More recently, Wilkes-Barre, Reading and Towanda and other systems have adopted such courses. The most practical organization has been found to be the division of the work into a survey of the purely local history of the town or city, building from that into county and state history. At all times the connection with the development of the nation as a whole should be stressed.

The local history club is another means of developing the program and especially helpful where time is lacking for curricular treatment. This can be made a part of the typical club program of the schools. The very organization of a club will stimulate interest in governing methods and principles. Once organized, the club may undertake study problems in local history, collect scrapbook material on local matters becoming better acquainted with community problems. Pilgrimages to adjacent historic shrines may be undertaken. Dramatizations of Pennsylvania historical episodes provide fascinating possibilities. In Lewistown, the vocational students of the High School cooperated with the county historical society in building a scale model of Fort Granville, a nearby frontier fort actually attacked and destroyed by French and Indians.[1]

The Community Historical Pageant

There is perhaps no better way to develop community interest in local history than through the community historical pageant. Since this subject is treated fully in a Commission leaflet, available for distribution upon request,[2] only a few comments will be made here. It is

[1] The Commission has available on request a manual on the work of school history clubs.

[2] *Community Historical Pageantry*, by Nora Lynch Kearns.

hoped that the patriotic societies, the clubs and service groups will unite in supporting a statewide development of historical pageantry as a defense measure building morale and promoting unity of spirit and purpose. The schools should also have an important part in this movement. They may also be made means of raising funds for war work as well as creating interest and sympathy for the causes they represent. It also represents an important contribution to the community recreational and educational program.

The well organized pageant should depict the community in terms of the past, its present and its hopes for the future. It should provide opportunity for participation by large numbers thereby heightening interest and morale values. It should endeavor to present the community as resulting from the common effort and sacrifices of people of all creeds, races and station in life. It presents remarkable opportunities to teach the lesson that our democracy is the result of the effort of all the people and can only be preserved by the same means. The great ideals of freedom, fraternity, tolerance and equality should be portrayed as representing the ultimate achievement of the American way of life. The common hopes, joys and sorrows of all races and creeds can be brought home to great numbers who see or participate in such a pageant.

The Historical Society and Morale

Perhaps the leaders of our numerous historical societies have never thought of their having anything to contribute to winning the war. However, if the importance of our local history as a morale resource is recognized, their role becomes of great importance. In the first place our local historians must be responsible for much of the educational and club activity suggested in this bulletin so far as information is concerned. They should stand ready upon call, or preferably volunteer their services to clubs and organizations wishing speakers on state or local history. They should be of assistance in planning programs and preparing study guides.

The historical society is always the principal depository for manuscripts, documents and newspapers which are the sources to be used by those delving into the community's past. The society museum collec-

tions may be drawn upon for illustrative material. Special exhibits may well be arranged for coming months portraying the role of the county or locality in other war-time days. Exhibits of Civil War letters, military commissions, etc., are appropriate. Displays of uniforms and military equipment of former times will also lend a defense motif to exhibitions. Explanatory material available for distribution in mimeographed form would be helpful.

Societies might profitably adopt some of the program suggestions previously presented for clubs and patriotic groups. "Our County in War Time" would provide an interesting program theme for any county historical society. Dramatizations of former war-time days would add color. The Lycoming Society a few years ago devoted a series to dramatizing the story of Williamsport in Civil War Times.

All historians should redouble their effort to produce publications in the form of books and pamphlets bearing on local history. It is an important contribution to expanding knowledge of local backgrounds. The Pennsylvania Federation of Historical Societies has gone on record as recommending that copies of such material be placed in the military post libraries. Even mimeographed articles would be helpful. An amazing interest in this type of reading material is evident at the posts. Camp educational directors would be glad to secure good speakers on subjects relating to history of surrounding areas.

The preparation of guides to points of historical interest in areas visited by soldiers is especially welcomed. Most societies are accustomed to arranging itinerarys for pilgrimages and this should not be a difficult task. These are most helpful if accompanied by a rough map and explanatory sketches. It is important to show exact locations and how to get to places. General Martin recently conducted a tour of the Fort Necessity area for a group of his men, showing the importance placed on this by military leaders. Any visitor to Gettysburg will note the presence of many visiting soldiers.

Those in charge of the army morale and educational program are especially interested in promoting amateur dramatics in the camps. Historical societies might well cooperate by furnishing dramatizations of historical events or characters. The Pennsylvania Historical Commission has available sample dramatizations of incidents in Pennsylvania history using radio techniques which should be helpful by way of sug-

gestion. Societies could be helpful in assisting schools and club groups to develop similar material based on local history.

In any "all out" program to educate Pennsylvanians in the historic role of their state and its communities in the building and safeguarding of our democracy, the historical societies must play a key role. It is not necessary for them to wait to be asked to do so. The societies might well call these matters to the attention of others. They should assist in promoting a campaign of education in Pennsylvania democracy among the multitudinous club and society organizations of the State. They are presented with an extraordinary opportunity to demonstrate their usefulness and perform an important public service.

The Commission Program

The Historical Commission itself is making use of Pennsylvania history as a morale resource. The radio series, "Pennsylvania—Keystone of Democracy," dramatizing the story of our State's contribution to the development and defense of democratic ideals and institutions, is on the air over twenty-seven stations. A regular series of newspaper stories on similar phases of Pennsylvania history has been inaugurated. In cooperation with the War Department, 200 copies of recent Commission historical publications have been distributed to camp and depot libraries.

Additional bulletins have been prepared for school and club use in cooperation with the WPA Pennsylvania Historical Survey. Subjects included thus far have been the story of *Washington in Pennsylvania, Lincoln and Pennsylvania, William Penn and the Founding of Pennsylvania,* and the *Fight for Free Schools in Pennsylvania.* Copies of the radio scripts in the "Pennsylvania—Keystone of Democracy" series are available in mimeographed form for use by dramatic groups in school or club programs.

Bulletins to be printed in the near future designed to encourage further study of Pennsylvania's role in establishing our democratic way of life include *Pennsylvania History in Outline,* a detailed analysis of the history of the Commonwealth with suggestions as to special topics for

use in programs. A booklet on *What to Read About Pennsylvania* will provide a list of books and historical fiction bearing on Pennsylvania's story. *Pennsylvania Leaders* presents a list of outstanding Pennsylvanians with a brief summation of their contributions to our national development. The Commission is glad to make this material available to interested individuals and groups.